

JEFFERSON'S INSTRUCTIONS TO LEWIS, JUNE 20, 1803

To Captain Meriwether Lewis esq. Capt. of the 1st regimt. of Infantry of the U.S. of A.

...The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, & ... by it's course and communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean...or any other river [which] may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce...

Instruments for ascertaining, by celestial observations, the geography of the country through which you will pass, have been already provided. Light articles for barter and presents among the Indians, arms for your attendants, say for from 10 to 12 men, boats, tents, & other traveling apparatus, with ammuniion, medicine, surgical instruments and provisions you will have prepared...over whom you, as their commanding officer, are invested with all the powers the laws give in such a case....

...Beginning at the mouth of the Missouri, you will take observations of latitude & longitude, at all remarkable points on the river, & especially at the mouths of rivers, at rapids, at islands, & other places

The interesting points of the portage between the heads of the Missouri, & of the water offering the best communication with the Pacific ocean, should also be fixed by observation, & the course of that water to the ocean, in the same manner as that of the Missouri.

Your observations are to be taken with great pains & accuracy...to fix the latitude and longitude of the places at which they were taken...

In all your intercourse with the natives, treat them in the most friendly & conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit..make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceable & commercial dispositions of the U.S. of our wish to be neighborly, friendly & useful to them, & of our dispositions to a commercial intercourse with them...If a few of their influential chiefs within practicable distance, wish to visit us, arrange such a visit with them...have them conveyed to this place at the public expense

On your arrival on that coast [Pacific] endeavor to learn if there be any port within your reach frequented by the sea-vessels of any nation, & to send two of your trusty people back by sea, in such way as shall appear practicable, with a copy of your notes: and should you be of opinion that the return of your party by the way they went will be eminently dangerous, then ship the whole...as you shall be able....

Given under my hand at the city of Washington this 20th day of June 1803.

TH: J. Pr. U.S. of A.